to the thermoplastic material;

-bringing the thermoplastic material into a reactive state; and

-hardening the thermoplastic material thereby establishing a permanent bond between the coloring agent and the thermoplastic material.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein only a surface portion of the thermoplastic material is brought into a reactive state.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein the coloring agent is applied by an electrostatic means.

14. The method of claim 11 wherein the toner and material are brought to a malleable state.

15. The method of claim 11 wherein the toner and material are brought to a fluid state.

16. The method of claim 12 wherein the surface portion of the thermoplastic material is brought to a malleable state by means of thermal energy.

17. The method of claim 12 wherein the surface portion of the thermoplastic material is brought to a fluid state by means of thermal energy.

18. The method of claim 11 further comprising:

-processing the thermoplastic material in a heated molding machine;

-applying heat to at least the surface of the thermoplastic material to produce the reactive state;

-maintaining at least the surface of the thermoplastic material in the reactive state; and

-applying toner to the surface to be printed.

19. The method of claim 11 further comprising:

-heating the thermoplastic material in a molding machine;

-hardening the thermoplastic material;

-warming the hardened thermoplastic material in a warming device; and

-bringing the thermoplastic material into the reactive state at least in regions of its surface.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the toner is brought to the reactive state by means of a warming device.

21. The method of claim 18 wherein:

-the surface of the material to be printed is in the reactive state;

-the toner is applied to the surface of the heated material to be printed; and

-the toner is brought to the reactive state by the material.

22. The method of claim 11 further comprising the steps of:

-processing the thermoplastic material in a heated molding machine;

-hardening the thermoplastic material;

-bringing the toner into the reactive state in a warming device;

-applying the toner to the surface of the material to be coated; and

-partially bringing the surface of the heated toner to the reactive state.

23. The method of claim 11 wherein:

-following the bonding of the coloring agent to the surface of the thermoplastic material;

-placing the thermoplastic material and the coloring agent in a cooling section; and

-bringing the thermoplastic material into a hardened state.

24. The method of claim 11 wherein the coloring agent is sunk into the surface of the

thermoplastic material to form a smooth surface structure.

25. The method of claim 11 wherein the thermoplastic toner particles are of the same thermoplastic material as the surface of the material to be coated.

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Frey
Reg. No. 43,618

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to Box Missing Parts, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231 on 12.15.00

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